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COMPSTD 7350.01: Theorizing Folklore: Tradition & Transmission
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Final Paper

"Not Soundin' like Yourself": Thoughts on the Adaptation of Other Communicative Genres in the Formation of an Auditory Media Ideology during the Vietnam War

The Vietnam Conflict has been dubbed "the first mass-media war" and "the rock 'n' roll war," both of which reflect the unprecedented ubiquity and social imbrication of media forms involved in the journalistic coverage and popular perception but, more importantly for the purposes of this paper, the on-the-ground experience of U.S. military personnel in late 60s/early 70s South Asia. As folklorist Lydia Fish (2003) has exhaustively chronicled as part of the Veteran's Folklore Project, the foreign military presence in Vietnam produced a huge variety of auditory expressive practices, communicated through a multiplicity of channels and platforms, some pre-existing the conflict and adapted for new contexts but many developed *in situ*. In addition to the dozens of official Armed Forces radio and television stations, USO tours, and Red Cross entertainment centers, the average soldier's soundscape was saturated by pirate radio broadcasts (from underground G.I. comedy shows to Hanoi Hannah), in-country folk song, rock and pop performances, and blaring "performances" of records, 8-tracks and cassettes emanating from "real echelon" hooches and portable players "in the bush." A less documented, but no less prevalent practice was the recording/audition of auditory correspondence using a technology newly available to military families/lower income consumers: the reel-to-reel tape recorder.

As noted by media scholar Karin Bijsterveld (2010), the reel-to-reel tape recorder/player is one of several sound reproduction technologies which tried, and ultimately failed, to capture a broad consumer market in the period between the auditory hegemonies of the vinyl record player of mid-20s to the 60s and the boombox/walkmen of the late 70s to the early 90s. The first widely affordable/available product since the Edison cylinder recorder which allowed consumers the ability to not only playback but also record auditory performances, the technology's use of cumbersome, open-

reel formats, ambiguous marketing and lack of a broadly codified set of "audile techniques" (Sterne, 2007) or performative conventions, hindered its domestication/normalization within the Vietnam-era U.S. discourse network – defined by Friedrich Kittler as "the network of technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store, and process relevant data" (Kittler, 1990) – unlike related technologies such as the Polaroid camera, Super 8mm movie camera, the photoprojector carousel, etc. However, the liminal and inchoate status of this medium – which, following Jonathan Sterne (2007), I'm defining as "_____" – and the communicative exigencies and existential ruptures of wartime, simultaneously afforded a unique set of adaptive and negotiated correspondence practices. The following study will examine three such "auditory letters" produced by Michael Harsh, Frank Kowalcyck and Steve Head, recorded and mailed to their families in 1968, 1969 and 1970, respectively. All three men were young, ranging in age from 18-21, enlisted in low-rank positions, and stationed near (but not directly in) combat zones. As little to no biographical information is available for any of the recordists or the tape's recipients, I will elide an in-depth contextualization of each tape's origins, archival hostings, etc.[1] in favor of a close-listening analysis, divided into three categories/sections. In the first, I'll examine examples of generic "remediations" – defined by Bolter & Grusin as "the (re)presentation of one medium within another" – involving the adaptation of epistolary, telephonic and face-to-face techniques and content into the "phonogenic frame" (Feaster, 2007; Bolter & Grusin in Novak, 2010). The second section will focus on embedded negotiations, including "metamediations," – a term I've used elsewhere[2] to describe "utterances specifically employed to describe, identify or comment on the relationship between the medium and its current user" – and generic experimentations afforded by the auditory (Campbell, 2012). The third section – difficult in the absence of ethnographic interpretation of these

[1] See Appendix A for an outline of each tape's basic features, including length, recording location, etc. and each recordist's limited biographical data.

[2] "Affective Traces: Sounds of Intimacy and the Phenomenology of the Voice in Amateur Tape Exchange during the Vietnam Conflict," presented at the British Forum for Ethnomusicology's One-Day Conference "Making Sound Objects: Cultures of Hearing, Recording, Creating, and Circulating," Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, November 24th, 2012.

specific tapes though informed by my work with similar recordings produced by my grandparents – will be dedicated to phenomenological speculations on what Patrick Feaster (2007) has called "eduction" – i.e. the reception techniques of the intended listener of a recording -- and the ways in which wartime temporalities and the paucity of the auditory may have affected the balance between eavesdropping and immersion central to the communicative niche filled by these tapes in the larger context of wartime, family correspondence. Finally, I will conclude with some thoughts on the possible contribution of the forms discussed above to the formation of a reel-to-reel "media ideology" (Gershon, 2011) during this period and its relation to contemporary forms of military communication.[3]

Ia: Epistolary Remediation

Though "taping" was often described as preferable to letter-writing by many veterans who employed it, for most the former never supplanted the latter in their communications and generally became one complementary channel among many – including care packages, phone calls, leave-time, and shared media (e.g. newspaper clippings), in addition to written letters. Thus, while some techniques and content are unique to it, this medium was subject to many of the same burdens and functions – i.e. information exchange, sharing lifeworlds, entertainment, and the maintenance of social networks -- of its written and telephonic counterparts. In this section, I'll begin by describing three "everyday" topics – correspondence relations, contextual descriptions and financial issues – prominent in both these tapes and their written antecedents, before describing a few of the telephonic and face-to-face conventions which lend to the ambiguous organization of this content.

[3] N.B. Kowalcyck and Head's tapes are each over 40 minutes long, while Harsh's tape was interrupted in its first minute of recording by a mortar attack, resulting in five minutes of combat ambiance and no spoken content. Thus, the first two tapes will figured prominently in sections I & II, while the latter will become relevant in section III.

In her study of Canadian wartime correspondence during World Wars I & II (2007), Liz Turcotte describes a variety of topical categories prevalent in her corpus, three of which also dominated K's, H's (as well as my grandparent's) tapes. The first, and perhaps most salient for wartime correspondents, are statements regarding correspondence itself. In both Turcotte's letters and my tapes, these tend to take two primary forms: 1) expressions of gratitude from the recordist ("you wouldn't believe how much this [contact] helps") but, also often ascribed to "the guys" in a soldier's unit (Head describes having a hard time keeping his mother's cookies or Jiffy Pop for long but reiterates how much his hooch-mates appreciate it as well as "sharing's" importance to group cohesion and morale), and 2) statements which seek to maintain larger social networks. Less prevalent in my grandparent's tapes – which could be due to their cohesion within their own, immediate family unit (married couple, in-laws and five children) as opposed to the more diffuse networks occupied by K and H (recently out of high school, single, brief work experience) – these statements took many forms, from requests to "pass on" addresses or appeals to write/tape to friends, extended family, neighbors, former co-workers (and many more) to requests for information related to these relationships ("How is Ricky doin' in school? Still raisin' hell of has he simmered down?", "I guess you can't tell anyone [Joe] what the hell to do … after they get outta school … but tell him I said to get out there and get the job"), assurances of production on their end ("I don't know what Aunt Helen is complainin' about, I done sent her three letters already"), and even attempts to connect separated relations at home ("I hear Sandy's buildin' a house near Cal City … should be near us") as well as friend's overseas to networks at home ("Bud's [K's hooch-mate] wife is from a town in Wyoming [slowly spells the name] … ask Marta if she knows where it is"). While my corpus is still quite small, these network connections seemed to be conceptually divided into three levels: 1) immediate family (mother and sibling are the primary recipients in both tapes), 2) extended family/friends/community members (which I've just described), and 3) religious affiliations. Though less prevalent in K's tape (though the latter does a significant amount of time describing a crucifix he

recently purchased – more on this later), Head's tape contains several references to "going to church when I can," staying in contact with his hometown Bible-study group, the importance of prayer to his connection with friends back home, and his likely break-up with his fiancé over "feelings about the Bible." In Head's case, this network seems to encompass both terrestrial and transcendent connections which – while I'd need to speak with him personally to verify – seem to occupy different social spaces.

The second major category involves descriptions of one's environment and sensorium. In both K and H's tapes, both men spend a good deal of time describing their "hooches" (for enlisted men, small barracks usually housing, and largely constructed by, 3-5 occupants) – where they procured each item, how they've set up "their space," the "zoo" of unwelcome guests (from "big ol' giant bull frogs that come in here when it rains" to thieving rats and giant cockroaches[4]), and the impossibility of keeping things clean ("there's just dust everywhere"). On interesting feature of these sections is how frequently K and H jump between descriptions of their current location – which seem to proceed as if they are verbally "mapping" their surroundings as they scan their hooch, describing each section in turn (a method unlikely to function as well in written form) – and imagined references to home. Occasionally, these jumps are used for analogy (e.g. K's description of Saigon "just like Chicago slums") but, more often they seem to occur as a result of an almost free-association-like mode of speaking and multi-layered perception of time – what Bourdieu describes as "_____" – that "affords" (in the Gibsonian sense) the connection and expression of disparate topics in a way a writing a letter, speaking on the phone or even face-to-face, would necessarily disrupt or inhibit. A good example occurs about ten minutes into K's tape:

> On this tape, it might be a little short because there ain't much you can say around here to cover 1,800 feet of tape. But the thing I wanted to ask you, like this buddy of mine just came up with ideas; when you do make me a tape and send it back with all this talking on it, catch the weather or the news or something on television on it. It definitely

[4] "Auntie Helen was teasing us about puttin' matchboxes on 'em and let 'em pull us around" (K)

> would be strange to hear something like that way over here because you just don't hear nothing that good back here.
>
> So, how's the weather been back there? Probably the snow and all that starting to melt. I wish we had a little snow over here. It sure will kill a lot of these bugs and make a lot of us feel a lot better. Of course, a lot of people here it doesn't bother them, but at nights since you pull guard around here and it gets cold, you wish you had your field jacket out there because it gets cold. I know it's going to be hard for me to get used to it when I get back in the world, but I ain't going to complain once I get back, I'm going to take it. I'm going to ask Inland [Construction] when I get back to work to put me on an inside job for the winter because I don't think I'll be able to hack that first winter out there. I'll give it a try if he can't do nothing for me. The most I could do is just freeze to death out there.

Starting with a performance disclaimer concerning a lack of content, K quickly jumps to a request for another media from home, which leads directly into a discussion of weather at home, the surreality/pleasure of experiencing the same in Vietnam, the imagined effect his current environment will have on his re-acclimation to and success in non-military life. All these shifts tape place over the course of one minute of tape (7:33-6:34).

As Turcotte notes, also central to sharing the minutae one's experiential life – an essential feature, as I've argued elsewhere (Campbell, 2012), to constructing relational intimacy over large distances – is describing the temporality of one's day. In these tapes, both K and H's detailed surveys of their daily duties, weekly schedules, leisure activities ("[joining an 8-track tape club] cost me $46 but it really makes the time go by faster over here"), ever present threat of "harassment" from officers, and descriptions of distant (or, rarely proximate) violence, capture the tension between boredom and brief, unexpected moments of heightened action and frantic preparation that many Vietnam veterans describe as experientially as the "hurry up and wait" phenomenon. In addition, both K and H seemed hyper-aware of the precise number of days they'd been in-country, the number of days until they (as well as many of their friends) would be going home[5], gaining a promotion (which meant both an

[5] Vietnam-era military slang for nearing the end of one's contract is "getting short" (???)

upgrade in pay and the greater likelihood of being granted a "drop"[6]) or transfer to a stateside posting, the exact time of day, etc, all of which would roll off the tongue with no pause for mental calculation. This may seem a somewhat obvious and banal observation but K and H's frequent and highly specific references to these numbers seems to indexicaly/indirectly express one effect of their military training on their linguistic repertoire, the amount of time dedicated to imagining home, leave or just "elsewhere," and the "ticking-off" element of their temporal everyday (though, as mentioned above, the affordances of the "phonogenic frame" and the family-focus of these tapes also likely contributes to the prevalence of this these topics in correspondence).

This same specificity was also present in K and H's frequent discussion of money matters. From inquiries about their families receipt of checks, money orders and the 1969 version of a W2, to account balances, pay scales, and discounts for "leave" and detailed descriptions of their purchases, both personal and intended for shipment home -- including a carved, wooden crucifix, an easy chair, a stereo (and several 8-track tapes), a roommates car, a suede leather suit, a hot plate, a tape recorder, bibles, and tennis shoes, among many more – all were detailed down to the dollar (if not the cent) and occupied a significant amount of tape space. As Miguel Vargas describes in his statistical study of migrant worker correspondence (2006), financial issues tend to figure prominently in letters, even when the relationship between recipients does not involve remittance. Again, while largely speculative without further ethnographic investigation, K and H's low-ranking (and potentially low income) status, the perception of Vietnam service as a job (or even a violation of civil rights) rather than one's patriotic duty or an opportunity for adventure (common sentiments in Turcotte's corpus), and relatively young age (taking place at the beginning of their working lives), might have contributed to the prevalence of "money talk." In her analysis of similar talk between serving men and their (now female-dominated) families, Turcotte also hypothesizes that immersion in "home matters must have imparted a sense of

[6] Vietnam-era military slang for a reduction of days off the end of one's contract (ibid.).

psychological balance to [soldier's] harsh lives" and, in father's and brother's imparting of financial advice and direction, a feeling of control (though, as Turcotte stresses, largely illusory as women took over many of these responsibilities) despite their geographic distance (Turcotte, 261, 2007). The allure of control (if somewhat imagined) over financial issues, is also relevant for K and H I think, however, due to their youth and relative inexperience with work or distant travel, there's an interesting generational and gendered shift in this dialectic, as K and H's money talk seems designed to impart/construct a sense of maturity for their mothers and themselves than to maintain a level of power over an everyday domain of life they no longer directly control.

Ib: Telephonic Remediation

While most of the elements I've discussed thus far have to do with similar forms of content, certain epistolary structures were also present in both tapes, most notably in sections organized into itemized lists containing responses to specific questions posed in prior tapes and letters – e.g. "yes, I've gotten all your packages: the shoes, the fatigues, the cookies – you really don't need to send more cookies" (H, 1969). In the example from K above, while it would certainly have taken a less "free" form in a written letter, the passage is clearly delineated into two sections with an audible pause (which, in the Postal Museum's transcript, is reinforced by paragraph indents and phrasal punctuation), that would "flow" just as naturally in an epistolary setting. However, many features of K and H's phonogenic performances, "sounded" like adaptations of telephonic and face-to-face techniques. In the following section, I'll briefly discuss the (at least within my currently limited corpus) structure of these tapes before offering examples of three telephonic influences: openings/closings, transitional discourse markers, and phrasing/intonation.

As the recording of an auditory message is far closer to writing a letter – in its status as "deferred communication" (Feaster, 2007), primarily monologic character, and extended length – than participating in a phone call, the latter's influence showed itself primarily in its absence. In K's, H's and my grandparents tapes, each side is often comprised of multiple, isolated segments, sometimes recorded over several days (or even weeks) before being packaged and sent. This structure seems to have as much to do with the contingencies of military life (i.e. constant interruption by enemy or superior and the variety of precisely timed duties throughout the day) as it does with the frequently expressed difficulty of "filling up 900 ft. of tape" (a topic I'll return to below) due to inexperience with "just talkin'" by oneself for an extended period. This is most apparent in K and H's frequent shifts in topic, with each topically-related section (e.g. cleaning the hooch, their mother's garden, driving in crowded urban spaces) comprising only 2-3 "sentences" worth of worded content (with several elisions, truncated words and repetitions), much less than an average length "paragraph" in a traditional letter. These sections are sometimes delineated in performance by pauses, which seem to be leaving space for an absent interlocutor's "turn" but, more often these "spaces" are "filled in" with a variety of discourse markers – i.e. "_____" – such as "so," "well," "uh/um," as well as longer transitionary phrases such as "I told ya' about … " (referring to a prior communication in a prior letter or tape)), "you asked me … ", and "guess you're wondering about …," and "changing the subject now …," "I bet you wanna know about …," to introduce new topics. Another "space filler" used more by Kowalcyck than Head but present in both tapes[7] is similar to the "audience responses" performed by the early phonograph storyteller star _____ in his multi-voiced settings of "rural talk," all the characters of which, were voiced by _____. As Richard Bauman notes, these paralinguistic (i.e. laughter, gasps, exclamations of surprise, etc.) and verbal comments (e.g. "ayup," "that's the truth," etc.) were

[7] In general, Head's tape was more "fluid" in its transitions, with fewer discourse markers and pauses. This might be related to his position as a radio operator (as opposed to Kowalcyck's role as a low-level tech) which would have required several hours of regulated speech and formal training.

necessary addition, in the absence of a "real" live audience, in order to manufacture the imagined dialogic space _____ fans expected (2011). In a similar fashion, K frequently comments on his own utterances, adding phrases like "that's pretty good," "very nice," "oh well," "can't believe it," or truncated repetitions of prior phrases, in the "beat" that would normally be occupied by another speaker. This kind of negotiation is also apparent in K's intonation of phrase endings, the majority of which are "down" indicating a speaker or content shift but, some, often utterances which would be categorized as questions (or at least punctuated with a question mark in a written context) seem to transition halfway through from "up" to "middle," as if K recognized the lack intonational efficacy in the context of deferred communication.

Finally, while K's tape opens in the middle of a word (which could be due to a performance "error" or the removal of a damaged section of the tape by National Postal Museum), H's begins with "Hello Mom. Hello Rick [presumably his younger brother]," the most commonly-accepted U.S. convention for beginning a phone conversation (as opposed to a letter or today, email). Both tapes, in typical telephonic fashion between intimates, "end" about 3-4 minutes before their final utterance with phrases that notify the listener as to the imminent end of the tape and the intention to stop recording. (For H, the beginning of the end is "I'm gonna go ahead and quit now before this runs out …," while K begins his close with "Well, I guess I'm gonna say goodbye for now, this tape is about to the end.") Both speakers then proceed to comment on their appreciation for continued contact, their hope that these tapes find their relative "well," and offer 2-3 more anecdotes before finally hitting "stop" on their tape recorders. This "extended goodbye" with one's parent's at the end of a phone conversation is all but cliché in American culture and, an evinced in these tapes, perhaps so ingrained as to not require the presence of one's parents at all!

As this section has demonstrated, both H and K brought similar, pre-existing genres to bear on their phonogenic performances. However, as indicated by the frequency of breaks in taping, discourse

markers and other "fillers," and rapid shifts in content, this medium was both new and unfamiliar to both recordists. The next section will briefly describe some ways in which the ambiguity of the tape recorder's use as a "deferred communication" technology resulted in new genres and modes of interaction.

II: Metamediation and Experimentation

One of the most common speech genres in my grandparent's use of reel-to-reel is what, similar to Barbara Babcock's theorization of the "metalinguistic," I'm calling "metamediative." In my grandparents' tapes, most of their references to the tape recorder and the voice's (as an affective domain) interaction with it, either described the ease of its use to "just jabber" (a mode of speech both highly valued and missed as a part of their daily interaction) or the importance of hearing the other's voice in conjuring a "real," intimate presences in the course of listening. While K and H offer a few similar statements – most notably K's hope that his mother and brother, in receiving his tape, will "make you feel 100% better hearin' my voice" and his stated preference for recording ("… so I figured I'd just sit down and instead of writing you a letter just make you's a tape. Sure a hell of a lot easier. Ya know how much I hate writin'") – most of their talk concerning the medium itself related to their stated difficulty in coming up with "stuff to talk about." Over the course of 39 minutes for K and 45 minutes for H, each mentioned "running out of things to say" due the length of tape, lack of anything interesting to talk about "over here,"[8] or the fatigue of talking for "almost three hours straight" (H, not owning a tape recorder of his own "because the PX is always out," traded his radio for a friend's recorder for an afternoon, forcing him to cram all of his taping (to his mother, girlfriend, and cousin) in to one extended

[8] "Over here" is another phrase uttered numerous times in these tapes and seems to index not just "Vietnam" but a host of other social domains. However, this topic will have to wait for a later paper.

sitting), eight and five times respectively. In one revealingly moment, H compares his performance to a genre both he and his mother are familiar with, exclaiming,

> "Boooy, it's hard talkin' this long! Feel like I'm a preacher or something, talkin' at a gospel meeting or something. My mouth's so dry, been sittin' in the same place talkin', and talkin', and talkin'. I don't even know what I said this whole time."

These difficulties, along with the ambiguity of the medium's conventions, seemed to spur both to try out other genres, as well as opening gaps into which "fell" forms of expression which would likely not occur in letters or dialogic conversation. In H's case, he often stops speaking in order to let his soundscape take center stage, including the sound of helicopters overhead, incoming messages on his work radio, and coaching one of his Vietnamese "hooch maids" through an English message to his mother (though his attempt pretty much fails when she takes over and finishes "he'll be home soon"). While he discusses his 8-track collection four times over the course of his tape, it is his mother who apparently employs musical performance as a way to fill up space. Having directed his speech toward his younger brother ("I'm talking to Ricky now, ok?), he encourages his sibling to talk more, stating "You didn't talk all that much on the last tape, not as much as Mom did … If you had talked more, she wouldn't have had to sing all those songs!" He goes on to ask Ricky to "send him to 8-track tapes" that he "digs" though, unlike my grandparents, never asks to have his family send him music on the tapes themselves.

K's tape, recorded in his hooch, is frequently interrupted by inaudible back channel asides or corrections from his hoochmate Bud (whose statements he never repeats either because he's not aware that Bud is too far away to be picked up by the microphone or he deems it unnecessary) though, when asked, Bud refuses to talk "on record." Rumblings of a nearby bulldozer, a superior officer's "harassment," Bud's persistent cough are also foregrounded by K who comments on the significance of each as they occur. Another unique feature of K's tape is

his frequent use of Vietnam-era military slang and pidgin, as well as genuine Vietnamese phrases/terms, e.g. “di di mau” (go away quickly), “buku” (a lot), “Arvin” (soldier in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam), “gettin’ short” (see above), “tee tee” (very little), and “papa san”/”mama san” (an older Vietnamese man and woman, respectively). Whenever K utters one of these terms for the first time, his voice becomes animated and he proceeds to translate and contextualize each, indexing (in my preliminary opinion) both a confidence and comfort associated with using a local vernacular connected to strong, comradic bonds, as well as pride in acquiring a new language. In discussing the latter, he references his mother’s attempts to teach him Croatian, bragging that “I can’t count in Croatian but I can count in Vietnamese” (up to 999 he mentions later, as well as being able to tell time, “except for the half-hours”). In another example of K’s imagining his future after his service is completed, he also mentions Bud’s warning that, if it learns it too well, he’ll have to “watch out speaking Vietnamese at home,” continuing, “I already slipped up a few times in this tape like sayin’ “buku.” This last statement indicates that it at least partially the phonogenic frame itself which is allowing this kind of content “make it through,” and thus an example of gaps opened in this liminal, mediated space.

In their bricolage construction, these tapes blur the line between “descriptive specialties” – a genre of early recording which sought, through studio wizardry, to create realistic “tone pictures” of historical events, parades, circus performances, etc. – and the idealized conception of a tamed, auditory “real,” exemplified by the excesses of the auditory captured by the unsupervised and undiscerning “ear” of the tape recorder (Kittler 1990, Sterne 2003). In shifting between moments of excited “jabbering,” in which the recordist gets phenomenologically “lost” in their performance, and the self-conscious, negotiated stances necessitated by navigating a new medium and environment, these tapes reflect the same tension between detached eavesdropping and immersive participation for their creators, as that

described by Feaster as central to the confused, experimental environment of listeners in the first years of commercial, phonographic recording (Feaster, 2007). The last section of this paper will speculatively explore possible intersections between these modes of creation and wartime modes of listener reception.

III: Eduction and Traces of War

As mentioned above, a variety of evocative sounds invaded the recording spaces of Vietnam recordists and, within my corpus, none so more dramatically than the tape recorded by Michael Harsh in Phu Bai in 1968. Originally intended as an auditory letter to his wife, an unexpected mortar/rocket attack on his base just after he hit "record," resulted in a harrowing 10 minute recording of explosions and gunfire before the tape cuts off mid-"boom." As Harsh's tape was described in the Ohio Historical Society's archives as an "auditory letter," I was likely as surprised as Harsh's wife, upon receiving my copy of his tape, to find no "voice" outside that of artillery fire. This rupture of my expectations got me thinking about modes of reception which might be unique to wartime communication. As David Novak describes in his article, "Sublime Frequencies," "distortion" has become a marked auditory feature in many forms of "world music" recording, production and evaluative modes of authentication which "conjures the idea of an undistorted other" and reinforces an ideology of sound in which "the presence of [an] original is proven by the infidelity of the copy" (Novak 2011, ???). This observation, which explicitly connects fidelity to social organization, highlights a central paradox in statements which praise auditory letters as offering a more "direct" connection between intimates across geographic divides. While the expansion into the timbral and paralinguistic afforded by sound recording allow for more detailed contextualization and reinforcement of a loved one's

presence on the part of a listener, the relative paucity of sensory information (compared to "everyday life") and the saliency of "voice" in auditory perception imaginitvely excite multimodal connections in listeners that, given the precarious situation and location of their loved ones, would seem to be as often frightening as pleasurable. In addition, if my grandparents are in any way representative of producers/consumers in this period, repeated listening was likely a common practice. In this mode of listening, far from diminishing the saliency of the unintended "excesses" of the recordist's soundscape which a listener might miss the first time through, these features – from stutters and smiles to rotating propellers and shots in the distance -- "come forward" in ways that might elicit anxiety and fear, especially in a discourse network environment which precludes immediate access to additional information and dictated by a temporality of deferment (tapes could take up to a week to arrive) and the vagaries of war (while U.S. armed forces were greatly expanding/improving their mail service during the Vietnam era, no system is infallible as many communications were lost).

Conclusion:

Far from unspoken assumptions, these issues were likely on the minds, and in the dialogue, of most correspondents during this period as they navigated a burgeoning world of amateur recording technologies which allowed them to extend, archive, reproduce and manipulate their memory and senses into new domains and, through experimentation, established successive "standardizations" a medium's social construction, which Ilana Gershon has dubbed "media ideologies" – i.e. "_____" (Gershon, 2011, ???). A particularly interesting, contemporary example of the way in which wartime might inflect a media's constitutive ideology comes from a recent panel discussion on wartime communication among

Australian military personnel held at the State Library of Queensland. In it, _____, describes observes that, while Skype and cell phone conversations are valued for their immediacy among navy personnel, the reality of off-shore service – namely the possibility of having one's connection cut unexpectedly which precipitates a visceral reaction of fear and dismay in the shore-bound party as "anything could have happened" – has led to a general preference for email and texting over the last five years in this branch of the Australian military. For many on the panel, letters and emails were also preferred for their ease of archiving, which brings me to the last issue I'd like to discuss: the paradox of permanence evident in the practice of auditory correspondence.

Indexing many of the tensions and confrontations of disparate media described above, the issue of permanence is particularly fascinating with reel-to-reel letters. According to my grandparents (as well as evocative, but ultimately ambiguous allusions in K and H's tapes), neither of them intended to keep the tapes which I eventually found buried in their garage, nor did preservation occur to them during recording. While valued for their immediacy and listened to repeatedly, most recordists taped used the same reels over and over, erasing performances they deemed essential in favor of returning the favor. Magnetic tape in this period was not prohibitively expensive (though nor was it cheap), which likely contributed to this practice. However, it seems like the influence of less prepared, open-ended, and episodic communicative genres like telephony and face-to-face interaction (mediums which, to this day, are rarely recorded outside of academic, legal, or surveillance scenarios) may have helped establish this pattern of use as well. As outlined above, the performances contained on these tapes are largely improvisational, intended as a deferred utterance in an on-going, multi-channeled and multi-media conversation, rather than closed and "sealed" unit of discourse. The simultaneous permanence and physicality of a reel tape and the intangibility and polythetic nature of its

content, speaks to this medium's continuing status as one of the most popular but rarely analyzed forms of 1960s technological discourse.

Appendix A

Tape 1:
Name: Steve Head
Age: 18
Rank: Unknown
Duties/Occupation: Radio Operator (‘copter mission dispatch)
Location/Tape Origin: Phuc Vihn, Viet Nam
Hometown/Tape Destination: CA, USA
Date of Recording: December 1970
Length: 39:13
Archival Presentation: Uploaded to www.vimeo.com along with 1) a “slideshow-style” collage of photography with images often timed to provide visual aids for particular descriptive utterances (the “hooch,” his “skinniness,” his dog, types of helicopter, etc.) created by the recordist and, 2) a brief description by Head of “voice letter” practice, disclaimers concerning his performance (“18 and immature,” with a “very odd 1960’s accent”) and his reasons for posting (“value” to others experiences of the “Viet Nam War era”).

Tape 2:
Name: Frank Kowalczyk
Age: Unknown
Rank: Private First Class (at time of taping)
Duties/Occupation: KP, Guard, etc.
Location/Tape Origin: Unknown
Hometown/Tape Destination: Calumet City, IL, USA
Date of Recording: 1969
Length: 43:17

Tape 3:
Name: Michael Harsh
Age: 20
Rank: Unknown
Duties/Occupation: Unknown
Location/Tape Origin: Phu Bai, Viet Nam
Hometown/Tape Destination: Unknown (intended recipient was wife)
Date of Recording: 1968
Length: 10:14

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